

ALABAMA – 2001 Nursing Facility Transitions Independent Living Center Grant

Identified Problems with the State's Long-Term Care System

- High expenditures for nursing home care in Alabama.
- Poor quality of nursing home care in the state.
- Lack of consumer direction in community-based programs.
- Services are fragmented and poorly coordinated.
- Resources are too concentrated in institutional settings and not readily available for community-based settings.
- Personal assistance services are not readily available to help transition individuals.
- Lack of affordable, accessible, safe housing in the community.
- Lack of information about community-based options among individuals with disabilities, family members, and health care providers.
- There are very limited support networks for people in nursing homes, including access to peers living independently in the community with supports.

Perceived Strengths

- An Olmstead Task Force is under the Director of the Medicaid agency's long-term care planning division and consists of consumers, families, independent living center (ILC), state agency personnel, non-profit agencies, and other stakeholders who are committed to effective implementation of Olmstead.
- The state's existing Medicaid waiver programs are a major resource that will be available to nursing home residents who are transitioning to the community.

Primary Focus of Grant Activities

- Increase awareness of HCBS options among nursing home residents and families through outreach to residents and to nursing home and hospital staff.
- Facilitate nursing home transitions using person-centered plans for people interested in transition.
- Hire and train outreach staff and people to facilitate transitions.
- Develop manuals for transition and staff training that can be used in other sites in Alabama and in the rest of the country.

Goals, Objectives, and Activities

Overall Goal. To assist nursing home residents who desire to return to the community to identify

and obtain both the transitional and long-term supports needed to do so.

Goal. To increase awareness of the availability of transitional and long-term services to support community living among nursing home residents and their families.

Objectives/Activities

- Train 10 Peer Outreach Advocates in Birmingham to conduct outreach in at least 70 nursing homes. Peers will be referred to specific nursing homes by the Project Coordinator. Generally, the Community Transition Advocate will introduce the peer supporter for the first time to the nursing home residents who have expressed an interest in transitioning to the community. Some peer advocates will, based upon their existing knowledge, refer nursing home residents to the program. The Peer Outreach Advocates will speak with those consumers in person and by telephone.
- The Independent Living Center and the State Ombudsman Program will provide outreach to hospital social workers and nursing home providers to promote the Transitions Program and establish relationships with hospital and nursing home staff.
- An Alabama transition guide and a brochure describing the program will be published in multiple formats and sent to 300 residents each year.
- The Birmingham Independent Living Center's web site will be updated to add a program description and links to other resources.

Goal. To assist nursing home residents expressing a desire to transition to the community with their transition.

Objectives/Activities

- Develop a consumer-directed, person-centered assessment model by utilizing an instrument developed by the Atlantis Center for Independent Living, "Moving Into the Community: Strategies to Help Individuals Make the Transition," and a planning guide adopted by Michigan independent living centers.
- Community Transition Advocates will interview and assess at least 40 nursing home residents.
- Community Transition Advocates will assist at least 40 consumers in developing a plan for transition.
- Assist the transition of at least 25 individuals into the community from a nursing home.
- Community Transition Advocates will follow-up with all consumers during the three months after transition to ensure that the necessary resources and supports are in place.

Goal. To recruit, hire, and train qualified personnel who are committed to the philosophy of independent living and person-centered planning.

Objectives/Activities

- Each ILC will recruit and train one full-time Community Transition Advocate to specialize in assisting transition.
- ILC will recruit and train 10 Peer Outreach Advocates.

- Birmingham ILC will employ a full-time Project Coordinator, who will research existing transition models and visit some that have successfully transitioned people from Nursing Homes.
- The Project Coordinator, Community Transition Advocates, and Nursing Home Ombudsmen will receive training on Person-Centered Planning.
- The Project Coordinator will develop a staff training manual and a nursing home transition policies and procedures manual that can be replicated by other sites.

Key Activities and Products

- Develop outreach to nursing homes and hospitals by training peer outreach advocates, collaborating with the State Ombudsman Program, and by keeping web sites up-to-date.
- Development of a nursing home transition policies and procedures manual and a staff training manual.
- Publication of an Alabama Transition Guide and a brochure describing the program and distribution of 300 per year to nursing home residents.
- Directly assist in transition through the development of a consumer-directed, person-centered assessment model and post-transition follow-up.
- Recruit and train community transition advocates, peer outreach advocates.

Consumer Partners and Consumer Involvement in Planning Activities

- An Olmstead Task Force comprising consumers, families, independent living centers, state agency personnel, nonprofit agencies, and other stakeholders who are committed to effective implementation of Olmstead, fostered collaboration among Systems Change grant applicants.
- Consumer focus groups were involved in identifying the state's needs and problem areas. The project leadership includes people with disabilities.

Consumer Partners and Consumer Involvement in Implementation Activities

Nursing home residents participating in the program will be asked to evaluate the project. These results will be shared with the implementation team. Consumers will be involved in the local implementation team that will guide the projects. Peer Outreach Advocates will include people with disabilities, senior citizens, and family members. The majority of peer outreach advocates will be people with disabilities. The project leadership includes people with disabilities.

Public Partners

- State of Alabama Department of Senior Services.
- The Governor's Office on Disability.
- The Jefferson County Housing Authority.
- Olmstead Task Force, which includes representatives from the State Department of Senior Services, the Department of Rehabilitation Services, the Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation, and the Medicaid Long-Term Care Planning office.

Private Partners and Subcontractors

Alabama Handicapped Association.

Public and Private Partnership Development/Involvement in the Planning Phase

Public Partners

- The Governor's Office on Disability fostered collaboration among Systems Change grant applicants.
- State agencies and the Olmstead Task Force collaborated in the analysis of strengths and weaknesses.

Private Partners

The original grant for the Mobile Center was written by the Birmingham ILC. Initially, both the Birmingham and Mobile Centers were under the umbrella of a statewide coalition. The directors of the centers communicate on a regular basis.

Public and Private Partnership Development/Involvement in Implementation

Public Partners

- The Governor's Office on Disability and Olmstead Task Force will be involved in the monitoring and evaluation.
- Department of Senior Services will provide assistance through the Ombudsman program to identify people in nursing homes wishing to move. They will also provide caregiver services (where appropriate) and waiver services, including personal assistance. In the Birmingham area, the Department of Senior Services will share a local implementation team with Birmingham ILC to develop resources, provide guidance, and coordinate efforts with Alabama's Real Choice Systems Change grant.
- The director of the housing authority in Jefferson County has expressed a commitment to provide housing assistance through HUD vouchers for subsidized apartments and existing home modification service programs funded by Jefferson County.

Private Partners

Alabama Handicapped Association is a consumer controlled grassroots organization of people with disabilities, most who know people in nursing homes. They will provide peer outreach advocacy services and ongoing peer support.

Existing Partnerships That Will Be Utilized to Leverage or Support Project Activities

- A 40-member Olmstead Task Force is developing a plan to bring Alabama into compliance with the Olmstead decision under the leadership of the Director of the Medicaid agency's long-term care planning division. The task force comprises consumers, families, independent living centers, state agency personnel, nonprofit agencies, and other stakeholders who are committed to effective implementation of Olmstead. The task force will coordinate activities between the NFT grant and Alabama's Real Choice Systems Change grant.

- In establishing housing priorities for the 2001 allocation cycle, the Alabama Housing Finance Authority (AHFA) promoted: 1) projects that require no less than twenty percent (20 percent) of the units be set aside for persons with mental illness or mental retardation; and 2) projects that will provide (optional) supportive services.
- Consumers leaving nursing homes will be able to use attendants trained under a Medicaid Infrastructure grant project to replicate an attendant training program piloted at Easter Seals of Central Alabama.

Oversight/Advisory Committee

- The local implementation team will discuss progress and strategies for overcoming barriers, and develop needed resources. Local team members will include consumers, peer outreach advocates, ILC staff, the nursing home ombudsmen staff, housing authority personnel, Medicaid waiver providers, and other local providers.
- A statewide implementation group—consisting of those involved in systems change initiative, including the state’s Olmstead Task Force—will discuss progress, systems barriers to effective transition, strategies to overcome those barriers (including amendments to waivers), and funding issues.

Formative Learning and Evaluation Activities

- This project has mechanisms for tracking program goals, objectives, and outcomes including: a management information system that tracks consumers’ progress and interaction with ILC staff, collection of MDS data to find any links between MDS data and resources necessary for transition, consumer evaluation, and ongoing monitoring of the Birmingham site by the Project Coordinator.
- Annual reports will be submitted to the Governor’s Office on Disability and the Olmstead Task Force for review and comments. In addition, regular updates will be provided at the Olmstead Task Force meetings.
- The ILCs have a Quality Assurance Plan, which requires routine, monthly review of client records by an in-house team. The local implementation team will collect feedback from program participants regarding the effectiveness and quality of assistance. The project director will submit annual reports to the Alabama Statewide Olmstead Workgroups detailing progress toward reaching goals, objectives, and recommended changes in service systems. The Project Coordinator will submit a quarterly report to the Project Director outlining progress toward reaching objectives and recommendations for changing the program. The ILC Executive Directors will provide reports to their respective boards of director. Management staff will prepare annual and final reports to describe progress, barriers, effective strategies for transition, and recommendations for system change.

Evidence of Enduring Change/Sustainability

- The Birmingham ILC has four strategies to work to develop funding to continue or expand the Transitions Program to disabled and elderly persons after the cooperative agreement ends: 1) community ownership and alliances, to increase the likelihood that Block Grant funds will continue the initiative; 2) soliciting funding from multiple funding streams, including United Way, federal sources, and private foundations; 3) replicating essential elements of the program in other organizations; and 4) integrating of the program into the ILCs' menu of services so existing ILC funding sources can pay for the program's continuation.
- Birmingham ILC is represented on several state committees and on the National Council of Independent Living Board, so it is well positioned to see that the project endures and to disseminate results at state and national levels.

Geographic Focus

The Birmingham, Alabama community (5-county area).